

Chapter 1

Time, space, reality and the cosmos The four universals of Moreno's philosophy

Commentary

The long tradition of folk tales that make sense of the world and hold a culture together find expression in our first chapter in which Ken Sprague breaks with academic tradition and uses his own creative technique of story-telling to introduce us to psychodrama and to the four fundamentals of Moreno's philosophy: time, space, reality and the cosmos.

Stepping into the cosmos with our feet on the ground
Ken Sprague

Imagination is more important than knowledge.
(Einstein 1932, quotation on poster of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

I am fascinated by the connection of psychodrama, books and storytelling. For me, every session opens an illustrated book of the protagonist's life.

Page after page, past, present and future of a group member's experience and dreams are re-created before our eyes. Things that didn't happen and perhaps should have happened are given life at last. Psychodrama is about what didn't happen as well as what did.

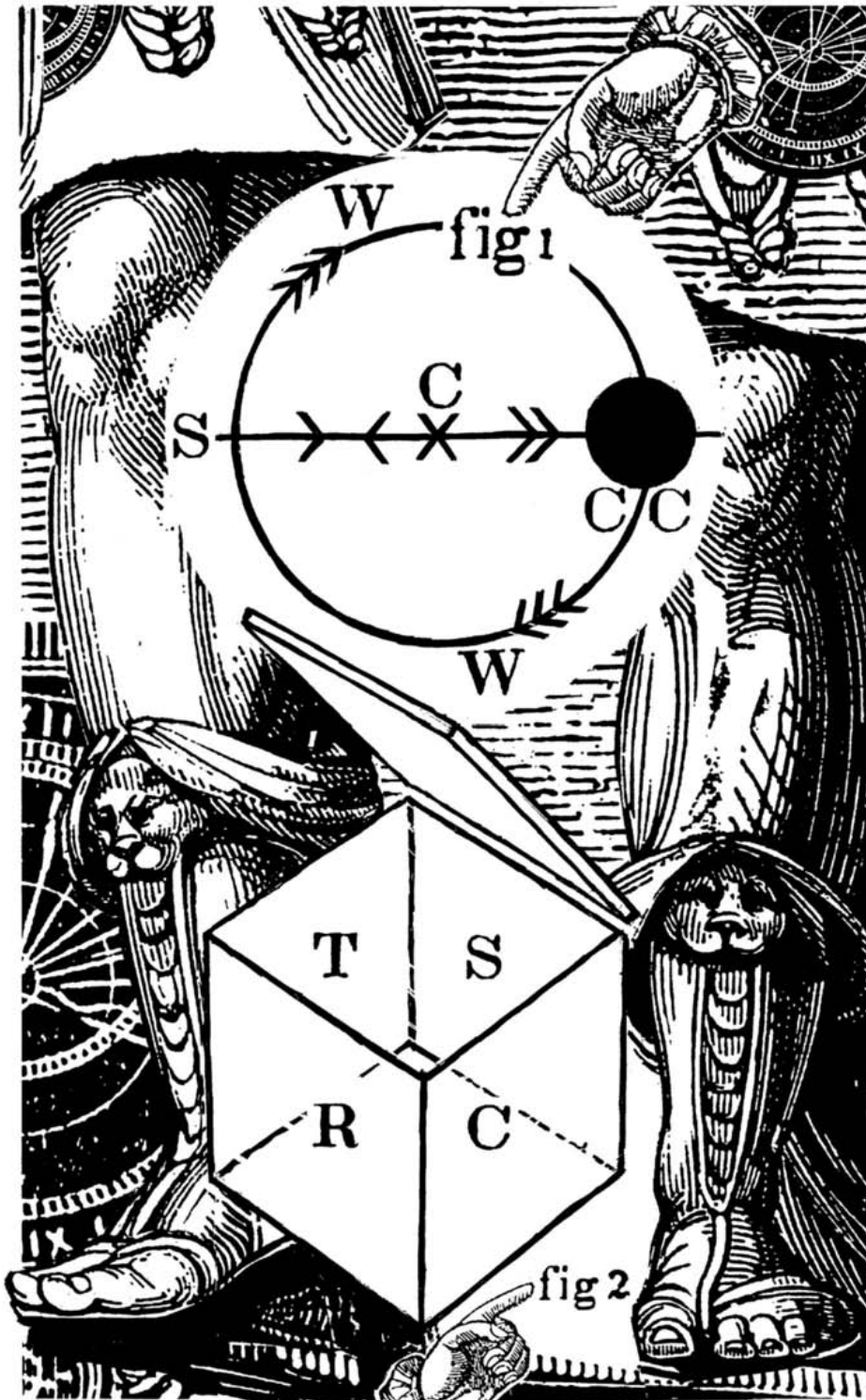
It all takes place in the time slot of the here and now. The group's energy flows to the stage in support of the protagonist. Each member waits, willingly available to be an auxiliary if called upon. The seeds of change are sown.

Stories and pictures have always caught my imagination. My hard-earned wages as a 13-year-old baker boy were spent within minutes of payment. I ran all the way to an antiquarian bookshop to buy bound but battered Saturday magazines. On one wondrous occasion the kindly bookseller let me have an *Arabian Nights, The Thousand and One Tales* printed in 1835, price threepence.

Before buying, I insisted the books be illustrated with black-and-white wood engravings. These were often crude apprentice work owing more to travellers' tales and the imagination of the artists than to their actual knowledge. (Some of these engravings are the basis of the montage illustrations in this book.)

Imagine my delight when, years later, Danny Yashinsky of the Toronto School of Story-telling gave me the following quotation:

Besides the drama the thing that influenced me most was the tales of A Thousand and One Nights. To be perfectly honest with you, I really owe it to those Tales and to the tremendous world of Persia and how roles were played then on the reality level in the streets of Baghdad and how it was told to us in



such a wonderful fashion. And so if you want to become a role-player you ought to read that book again.

It contains all we want to tell you tonight.

(Moreno 1948, unpublished transcript of a psychodrama session in New York City)

Because of the importance of all this to me, this personal view of Moreno's philosophy is presented with stories and with comments. I want to tell what, for me, psychodrama's underlying philosophy is about, to show how it can be enjoyed and to suggest ways of discovering its relevance for us all as we approach the twenty-first century.

First story

Dr Moreno was walking on Columbus Circle in New York City. A policeman and a black man were having an argument. Moreno entered the situation and said, 'Excuse me, I'm a psychiatrist. Can I help?' Whereupon the two were each asked their side of the story. It ended with the black man being allowed to go on his way.

(Z. Moreno 1993, personal communication)

Moreno didn't pass by on the other side of the street thinking it was none of his business. He didn't dismiss the event as a case of a policeman doing his job. He didn't ease his conscience with the idea that the black man was, in all probability, a villain deserving retribution. He went over and got involved. He poked his nose in. Most importantly he took his professionalism beyond his doctor's office to show that psychodrama belongs in the street as well as in the clinic. The ongoing problem is that often we leave our skills in the therapy room and meanwhile the world proceeds to go horribly mad!

James Hillman looks at it from another angle:

Every time we try to deal with our outrage over the freeway, our misery over the office and the lighting and the crappy furniture, the crime in the streets, whatever—every time we try to deal with that by going to therapy with our rage and fear, we're depriving the political world of something.

(Hillman 1992:5)

Surely Moreno anticipated this dilemma when he designed psychodrama as a life tool not just something for use in the clinic. He makes it explicit when he asks us to see ourselves operating responsibly in three dimensions—the personal, the social and the cosmic. There's nothing mystical about it, he's simply saying, keep our feet fair and square upon the ground, attempting to solve its problems even as we reach for the stars: it's all connected.

Second story

My partner, Marcia Karp (who was trained by Moreno), and myself attended the Eleventh International Congress of Group Psychotherapy in Montreal. On the second day we were walking in the Congress Plaza. It was early evening with a grey sky and a hint of rain to come.

Two elderly Chinese were doing Tai-chi, their movements emphasising the emptiness of the ugly concrete complex and its surrounding space. A young woman entered from the far corner of the Plaza and walked, head down, towards us. We had seen her in the Congress Hall earlier

and knew that she was from one of the East European delegations. She caught sight of us, hesitated for a moment, and then veered away. Clearly something was wrong.

Marcia and I had been enjoying being together after a hectic day of plenary sessions, workshops and crowded meetings with friends old and new—the stuff of international congresses.

Marcia let go of my hand, went straight up to the young woman and said quietly, ‘You look tearful; would you like a hug?’ The two women held each other while the younger one cried. After a while she raised her head, looking somewhat embarrassed. Marcia said quickly, ‘May I double you?’ There was a grateful nod and Marcia stood alongside the young woman, adopted the same slightly stooped position, the same embarrassed expression and said, ‘I can’t stand being treated like a pauper. Nobody understands how I feel.’

The young woman gestured with her hand in a secretive behind-the-back movement and said, ‘Yes, they are putting money in my hands as if it’s a dark secret. I don’t want their dollars.’

Marcia (as the double) said, ‘I feel terrible. They make me feel cheap. How can I tell them that inside I feel richer than they are.’

‘Yes, yes. How can I tell them of the richness of my own culture?’ replied the young woman with energy.

We then heard the tale of coming from Eastern Europe (in itself no small task at that time) into the unhuman scale of the Palais de Congrès and opulence of the hotels used by the delegates. We heard of misunderstandings about money and of thinking that the expensive Congress fee (enormous by eastern European standards) included accommodation. Instead there were fees for everything: fees for breakfast and fees for coffee; fees for lunch, dinner, and for taxis to and from the proceedings. Our new friend had hardly eaten since arriving in Montreal.

All this at a congress entitled, ‘Love and Hate—Toward Resolving Conflict in Groups, Families and Nations’.

Dr Moreno in New York and Marcia Karp in Montreal took the simple and direct action of poking their noses in.

There are three things that strike me about their two encounters:

HOW they did it. This I would call technique and personal style: both are important in psychodrama.

WHY they did it. This could be called theory—an understanding of which is essential for all practising the method.

THAT they did it. This I would call philosophy.

The philosophy of the ‘encounter’, the meeting of two people, is propelled by a spontaneous response to a situation and is open to the idea of an immediate creative exchange in the here and now.

The idea is of men and women as personal and social beings but also as ‘cosmic’ beings, that is as people needing to arrange their individual and collective behaviour in order that life can continue not just to survive but to survive with love. This is the goal that Moreno sought and the reason he developed psychodrama. It’s an honouring of creation.

Betty Gallagher points out that ‘poking one’s nose in’ is not a job for the faint-hearted, it takes courage. I agree, but it’s more than courage. It needs a deep commitment to the craft of learning and understanding what’s going on in the world around us. We must bring appropriate techniques into action, adding to and changing them if required. In other words, it means doing our homework, continually training spontaneity and developing creativity.

The following editor's note gets at the essence of my Montreal story: 'the importance of living one's truth in action; the validity of subjective reality; the premise of a here-and-now encounter between individuals (including client and therapist), and a deep egalitarianism' (Fox 1987:3). The quotation is taken from *The Essential Moreno* edited by Jonathan Fox. It is a book which is, for me, a wonderful source of understanding. Chapter 1 on 'The four universals' is the best introduction to his philosophy that Moreno gave us. Often ahead of his time, when he set down the four universals in 1966, he was very much a man 'of his own time. In the same year, Paul Abrecht, of the World Council of Churches, called for world economic justice and welfare provision. This was four years before Rachel Carson released *Silent Spring* (1965), an angry and challenging book demanding that we stop the destruction of our planet. This book was a great voice for the protection of our natural habitat; a demand that we love life.

Two years later Moreno delivered a paper at the University of Barcelona called 'Universal peace in our time'. The paper contained his famous statement that 'A truly therapeutic procedure can not have less an objective than the whole of mankind' (Moreno 1968:175).

Moreno regarded this quotation as his best known opus. It forms the single opening sentence to *Who Shall Survive*, a title he coined to indicate that the fate of humankind may be imminently at stake. He was 'of his time' because the rest were catching up and being more specific about what was wrong.

As we approach the end of the century the industrial nations are crazily in pursuit of materialism while the other half of the world's people starve. Pollution of the shoreline and seas is greater than ever. Oil tanker disasters are almost commonplace and the leader writers still treat 'wild life' as something separate and not affecting our own life.

Professor Trevor Haywood calls it 'non-logic' in a brilliant video, *Managing for Absurdity*: 'Pollute and poison the world that is essential for our survival in order to manufacture artefacts that are not essential but provide transient pleasure or just marginally improve our convenience' (Haywood 1992). Journalist John Pilger reminds those young people who, to their credit worked so hard for Live Aid, just where real power lies:

How many of us were aware during 1985—the year of the Ethiopian famine and of 'Live Aid'—that the hungriest countries in Africa gave twice as much money to us in the West as we gave to them: billions of dollars just in interest payments.

(Pilger 1991:64)

Within the rich nations the gap between the haves and have-nots increasingly widens. Health care deteriorates, crime rises, drug abuse is at epidemic proportions; the arms trade is a 'growth' industry and people die by its products both overseas and at home. In Britain we have an ongoing war that has claimed more than three thousand English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh lives.

The politicians come out with the same threadbare ideas: more police, more guns and more military. A retiring military commander hands it back to the politicians saying the only solution will have to be a 'political one'. It's Tweedledum and Tweedledee, with death for both Tweedles.

New ideas, new dreams, a vision powered by spontaneity and creativity were never more relevant. Maybe psychodrama's underlying philosophy is an idea whose time has come? 'Man fears spontaneity, just like his ancestor in the jungle feared fire; he feared fire until he learned how to make it. Man will fear spontaneity until he will learn how to train it' (Moreno 1953:47). I would like to update the last sentence of that quotation: 'Men and women will fear spontaneity and creativity until they learn how to re-train them.'

When we are small children, those life-giving qualities burst forth in all directions. It's only when the sausage machines of school, jobs and society get to work on us that those gifts of childhood go into retreat. They hide away and we end up fearing them.

Moreno saw his philosophy hidden away in dusty libraries. In the 1990s I see his ideas as relevant to our times and being reconsidered. The students enrolling for training in psychodrama all over the world may be the ones to give them life in the coming century. As new centurians they will face obstacles to creative change in human behaviour that are colossal. The Goliaths are bigger than ever and in the climate of current world reaction the Davids may be smaller.

There is, however, an important difference. The Davids now have Davidas alongside them, and often way out ahead. Women liberated! That, combined with our slingshot of spontaneity and creativity may yet give us the edge.

Third story

In the 1960s when America was considering the bombing of China, Moreno proposed a psychodramatic encounter between President L.B. Johnson and China's Leader, Mao Tse-tung. He wanted it to be seen on television across the world.

The fact that it didn't happen does not mean that such encounters cannot happen. It's true, of course, that there are considerable obstacles. There is a somewhat understandable lack of interest, a feeling of 'I can't make any difference'.

This century has seen people's dreams and visions of the future smashed time and time again, promoting apathy and hopelessness. We get corrupted by our seeming powerlessness. Religious and social philosophies have become dull dogmas or oppressive scourges in the hands of priests and politicians. Helping people to dream again is no small undertaking.

Fourth story

In 1912 when Freud asked the young Moreno what he was doing, he replied, 'Well, Dr Freud, I start where you leave off. You meet people in the artificial setting of your office; I meet them in the street and in their home, in their natural surroundings. You analyse their dreams; I try to give them the courage to dream again.'

(J.L., Z. and J.D. Moreno 1964:16)

Later in his life Moreno was a little less optimistic and well aware of the difficulties when he wrote:

My philosophy has been misunderstood. It has been disregarded in many religious and scientific circles. This has not hindered me from continuing to develop techniques whereby my vision of what the world could be might be established in fact. It is curious that these techniques —sociometry, psychodrama, group therapy—created to implement an underlying philosophy of life have been almost universally accepted while the underlying philosophy has been relegated to the dark corners of library shelves or entirely pushed aside.

(Moreno 1953)

Fifth story

A few years ago, trying to interest students in the underlying philosophy, I felt a bit isolated, stuck among wonderful techniques which would help patients, clients and students alike. It is clearly difficult to help individuals towards health while the collective body is so sick. The danger of training students, good at using the techniques but unable or unwilling to implement the underlying philosophical concepts the techniques were designed to bring about, has worried me for a long time. My attempts to interest people in the broader picture met with little success. A trusted colleague summed it up: 'I still don't accept that cosmic bullshit!' Then it hit me! Perhaps people could be interested in the ideas but was I presenting them in the wrong way?

The concepts should be 'shown' psychodramatically. It was time to take the advice suggested by my grandfather in the following story.

Sixth story

A man from Cornwall, interested in buying some horse harness from a dealer, said, 'You'll have to show me' (shades of Moreno) but the man from Devonshire, also interested in purchasing, said, 'You'll have to put it in my hand'.

It occurred to me that a philosophical model could be made, allowing people to 'see' the ideas, to play with them and discuss possible action for change.

THE HOLWELL BOX

There were many possibilities for constructing such a model—different shapes, sizes and materials. However there were four basics:

- 1 It must be big enough to be demonstrated in a group of 20–50 people.
- 2 It must be visually stimulating.
- 3 It must grow before people's eyes so that their imagination could be sparked and enactment and discussion promoted.
- 4 It must be transportable.

At the same time it must be possible to dismantle and rearrange the model so that people learn that just as they take a stand on important concepts they also constantly question the stand itself. They must take it in their hand, test it openly, otherwise dogma awaits us. The Holwell Box was my answer, born from these conditions.

THE FOUR UNIVERSALS—TIME, SPACE, REALITY, COSMOS

Seventh story

The first prototype was made at Riitta Vuorinens Institute in Finland. It consisted of a cardboard box given by the shop nextdoor. On the bottom we wrote SC (spontaneity and creativity). The remaining four sides we labelled T, S, R and C—Moreno's 'four universals' of time, space, reality and cosmos (See 'fig 2' in the montage illustration at the beginning of this chapter). The group divided into four smaller groups, taking time to choose with whom each person wanted to work.

After a few minutes of frenzied preparation, each group presented their view of one of the four universals. The presentations involved mime, dance, a tragic farce about reality and a discussion on cosmos. The latter took the form of the small group simply continuing their discussion preparation while the rest of us looked on. Each small group's work was extremely creative and served as a warm-up for the whole group. I drew Moreno's 'Canon of Creativity' diagram on to a large flipchart, intending to give a short lecture. However, the group was ready to go; the time for lecture or discussion was over; the group wanted action. We therefore made an action diagram, a big circle involving everyone. I had them move clockwise representing the field of rotating operations between spontaneity, creativity and cultural conserve. I asked them to chant in time to their movement and spontaneously they set the words 'warm-up' to the tune of a popular hymn. (Warm-up is the 'operational' expression of spontaneity.) I asked a young man in a grey jumper to pretend to go to sleep in the centre of the circle. He represented slumbering creativity (C).

If you look at the montage illustration at the beginning of this chapter, 'fig 1' is my own interpretation of Moreno's diagram from *Who Shall Survive* (Moreno 1953:46).

The circle to which the finger points is our ring of moving people. A woman in a brightly coloured red dress not only volunteered to be 'Spontaneity' (S) but literally danced at the chance. She moved towards the circle centre ('C' in the illustration, representing creativity) and aroused him (S → C). The young man (C) opened his eyes and was responsive to dancing spontaneity (S → C). Who wouldn't be! From their hilarious interaction the details of which can be imagined, a cultural conserve was born (S → C → CC). Cultural conserve (CC) is the end result of the creative act, including of course ourselves, or it can be a book, a painting, a loaf of good bread. All, given time, becomes worn, outdated or stale. Conversely, each also has the possibility of being the stimulus for new creativity.

This led us to explore the fact that cultural conserves are complex; they accumulate indefinitely and remain 'in cold storage'.

The group became a cultural conserve (CC) and froze, like statues in a museum's dusty storehouse. This caused some difficulty and head-scratching until the catalyst (S) 'Spontaneity', still dancing, came to revitalise them (CC → S → CC). Everyone was delighted at being reactivated. They were a sight for sore eyes; a group of friends who had together learned something of value and enjoyed themselves doing so.

Spontaneity does not operate in a vacuum, it moves towards creativity or towards conserves. The concept is fully explained in Moreno's tome *Who Shall Survive* (1953:46) but I would urge you to activate it if you want people really to 'feel' that they understand it.

The philosophy of the spontaneity and creativity of every living person is, in my view, the basis of Moreno's ideas; that is why I made it the base of the Holwell Box. Moreno insists that the innate potential for spontaneous and creative action by individuals and groups represents untellable wealth. He builds upon this base a methodology of action that encourages us to release, develop and enlarge our own potential and the potential of others. In the process of reaching the limit of our creative potential the limit itself expands.

Joining our spontaneity and our creativity we can become our own gods. Each aspect needs the other in a creative relationship. If we fail to dovetail the two or get them in inadequate proportions, we can cause problems. My youth gave me hard lessons in that truism.

Eighth story

Once there was a bullfight in the grand Roman arena at N-mesin the South of France. The bull was large and the matador famous. I was eighteen with an English sense of fair play. The two together led me to jump into the ring in support of the bull. He was greatly outnumbered and cruelly wounded.

My action was spontaneous but hardly creative. The bull did not speak English, was unimpressed by my assistance and active in urging me to leave the arena. The crowd agreed with the bull.

I became a breathless example of spontaneous idiocy.

All psychodramatists need an ongoing commitment to learning. High on the learning list is the need to care for and develop our own spontaneous and creative gifts.

This applies to each of us and I suspect the greater our experience the more we need to polish and renew those gifts. Like spades and ploughshares, we should not allow them to rust. And yet, rust they do!

Ninth story

My partner and I were sitting in our dentist's waiting room. We both had appointments; mine was first.

Marcia was reading a magazine and another woman was turning the pages of an old colour supplement. Ironically enough, I was reading the chapter on spontaneity in my favourite book, *The Essential Moreno* (Fox 1987). The three of us were still and quiet. Four other occupants of the room were less so. A young mother was consoling a child beside her. The father was sitting slightly apart, pretending to read a car magazine while really anxiously watching a second child. She was alternately rolling on the floor or piling and demolishing toys in a corner of the room.

The child, aged about two and a half, selected three toys: a small cushion with a laughing face, a plastic doll and a large Welsh dragon. She carried this armful across the room and, full of confidence, arranged them on my lap. Her eyes tested me and she waited. I was flattered, put down my book and with exaggerated care looked at each of the toys. The cushion with the face was grotesque, the doll hard, cold and unhappy-making.

The dragon, in contrast, was soft, warm and the feel of it took me back to my own childhood and the little girl waiting at my knee. I made some friendly noises and replaced the dragon into

my new friend's welcoming arms. At this point the mother said loudly, 'That man is reading his book.' The words halted the child and effectively excluded me. I felt robbed.

I wanted to say, the book in my hand is simply a lot of symbols on a page. In one sense it's quite dead, a cultural conserve, whereas the exchange with your daughter is pulsing with life. The book can be read some other time but there may be no other time for this encounter. Briefly, the child and I had been co-players. The mother's intervention had stopped the game and changed my role. If I had given voice to my feelings I would be engaged with the parents whereas the need of the moment was to stay in contact with the child.

The mother was acting out of concern or propriety or both. Perhaps she was also giving the message, 'Don't go with strangers.' Suddenly it was my turn for the dentist's chair and I left the room.

As the door closed behind me something wonderful happened. The small child took the toys once more and repeated her approach with my partner, Marcia. Once again the mother shouted, 'The lady is reading'. Both Marcia and the child were silenced by the maternal dictum and I suppose, and hope, the little girl took her wonder elsewhere.

In spite of her mother's censoring and our compliance, the girl's spontaneity remained intact and she came back for a second try. Her two-and-a-half-year-old spontaneous drive left all the adults far behind, their spontaneity and creativity corroding. But what of my own actions?

I regard myself as a spontaneous and creative man. There is some evidence to support that claim, yet, I watched as a delightful exchange was destroyed.

Why didn't I placate the parent quickly so that I could stay with the action? The dragon had a long, bright orange tongue. Jonathan Fox's book has a bright orange cover of the same brilliance. Being a paperback, it wobbles about like a tongue if held by its corner. The young child and I could both have held orange fire-tongued dragons in our hands. Fairyland and fantasy were ours for the taking. We both were robbed because my spontaneity, like spades and ploughshares, had become rusty. The parental dictum, 'They are reading their books', the assumed importance of adult behaviour over child's play and the decorum of the waiting room are all rust-makers. Each is in need of sand-blasting.

That illustration of the child in the dentist's waiting room has many connections for Morenian philosophy. I would like to consider three:

- 1 The primary importance of action.
- 2 The book as cultural conserve.
- 3 The role of the dreamer.

When the small girl courageously crossed the room, bearing toys, she used no words; her action was primary. Moreno called it the royal route to the psyche.

My response was important in developing the action she had begun. The way we both used eye contact, facial expression and, as trust was built, physical touch; each form of contact contributed. My vocal responses as the toys were given were acceptance noises, oohs and aahs rather than words.

By exercising sociometric choice the girl picked me to receive the toys. My book was no barrier to her action. Moreno would certainly have welcomed her initiative:

From the point of view of a creative revolution, the book had become a symbol of a reactionary movement, not as much because of its contents but as *a form of creative behaviour*.

Would God start the world by writing a book? Did He start the creation of the universe, billions of years ago, by writing the Genesis?

(Moreno 1953: xvi)

Psychodrama is an action method growing from a system of theories that gives first place to creative action.

When the child held the dragon and I held the book that could have become a dragon, that was the moment of aborted creativity. In that second we lost the key of fantasy, the faculty of imagination. I gave up the role of dreamer. For me, and I believe for psychodrama, fantasy is not a road to escapism. Although in a given session fantasy may be used to escape from overwhelming sadness or stress, it is primarily a pathway towards reality. It is the dreamer's path.

When I started to work with Marcia Karp in 1973 I entered a psychodramatic dream.

Tenth story

There was a clear need for a permanent residential centre to establish the teaching and practice of the method in Britain. I had, two years previously, purchased a ruined hill farm in North Devon. The place was overgrown by trees and brambles. Wild creatures lived in rotting barns but it had the atmosphere of a forgotten Garden of Eden. It was the stuff of dreams and accordingly we dreamt.

Buildings with new purpose, colours and shapes arose in our imagination. Strange people and animals entered and acted out their lives and fantasies. Love was large within it all. Fantasy had become vision and vision became the process of visualising. We made drawings and little cardboard models but mostly we just built. My father and eldest son Sam helped.

Dream gradually became reality and vice versa.

It is important continually to link reality with fantasy so that we can participate in our own dreams. Even now, after twenty years, Holwell, the farm that grows people, remains, in part, a dream.

Our summer international workshop is an example. Sixty people from twenty-two different countries, using a mixture of languages, living and learning together; disagreeing and falling out, negotiating, trusting and loving. It all happens, it is all real but most important is the fantasy factor. What *can* happen? Will people dream again? What will each build, what will be built between them and what will they build when they return to their own lands?

THE BOX DEVELOPS

The second Holwell Box prototype was made in a Norwegian music school across the park from Edvard Munch's Museum. He was a painter who knew the effect of 'roles' on people and the Museum's conference hall with his great painting of the sun, cosmic in conception, would make a fantastic venue for psychodrama.

This time our box was more sophisticated—a lady's hat box. It had a tight-fitting lid and we had to cut a slot to get our fingers in to pull it off. The slot looked like a letter box so I had each member write their favourite technique on a piece of paper and 'post' it.

Role reversal, doubling, mirroring, warm-ups, cool-down ideas—the box was almost full—a philosophical model containing the techniques. For it to contain more (and there is more all the time, it's what this book is all about) the container must expand.

Someone produced a large knife from the kitchen. I cut the box apart and placed the base, spontaneity and creativity (SC) in the centre of the floor. The four sides, time, space, reality and cosmos (T, S, R, C) (see 'fig 2' on the montage illustration to this chapter) were taken to the four walls of the big room, leaving us with the slotted lid.

After discussion and humorous enactments, we labelled it 'Godhead' and hung it from a central-heating pipe high on the ceiling. It hung there, turning like a mobile, representing different things to different people. Most accepted 'Creation' as its name and the direct relationship to the label at our feet—our own creativity.

Eleventh story

A lady approached me at the Canadian Congress. She had been at the Norwegian music school session. She was enthusiastic for all we had learned and spoke of her own students' growing interest. I was delighted by her vibrancy but then she said what really caught her imagination had been 'the daring and dangerous way you opened the session'. Dangerous and daring? I had no such memory.

She continued, 'Yes, when you finished cutting the box apart, you threw the big knife and it stuck, quivering, in the floor—we were all riveted!'

There had in fact been no danger. I had stood in the centre of the big room with forty people sitting in a large circle around me. After cutting the box I dropped, rather than threw, the knife to the floor. In my youth I had worked in a circus and had been friends with the knife thrower. It was really a case of spontaneity meeting past experience. But it serves to remind us that a little show goes a long way! I think Dr Moreno would probably agree.

The box began to catch people's interest as a way of learning to see three-dimensionally, to think more broadly and to begin to act more in keeping with the unifying concepts of psychodrama. I do not wish to exaggerate: the box is simply a model; perhaps it can be a spur to making your own models and visual presentations.

BETTER BOX

The third prototype Holwell Box was made in the workshop of my village carpenter, Dave Cross. Village carpenters are people worth knowing! The assembled box is 1 foot square, brightly labelled and made of polished wood. The six pieces are held together with Velcro, Dave's idea. It has a separate stand which displays it on its corner where it can spin like the world and all the stars. It fits into a case and travels with me. Let us examine the four sides of the box and the 'four universals' in terms of therapeutic and educational procedures. We'll begin with time, space and reality.

TIME, SPACE AND REALITY

Twelfth story

Tess has Down's syndrome and at the time of this story was 18 years old. She rarely spoke, apart from one word, 'Naw!' That one word could be delivered in many ways, expressing mood, statement or question. Tess flailed her arms, hurting herself on table corners and school

furniture. Anyone who got in the way could also receive a heavy blow. Although labelled violent, Tess was, for me, really incredibly frustrated. She was one of a group of young people with severe learning difficulties; an isolate taking little part in the group's activities.

We met as a 'life drama' class twice a week for two-hour sessions. In discussion the students had agreed on a four-week project on 'America'. Everyone, except Tess, wanted to become Dallas TV stars, gangster movie guys and dolls, or to visit 'diners' to eat hamburgers or hot dogs. New York meant a chance for the tall ones to be skyscrapers and the girl in a yellow jersey to be a New York taxi cab.

And so it was for several sessions. But then, my partner, Marcia, born in the Midwest, came to show her father's shoe store. I wanted the young people to see another America, one they didn't know about, one that would provide roles that would really challenge their imaginations.

We built the shop on the small-town market square. We emphasised the Revd Tom Wilson's sequence of scene-building—first there was space, then there were things in space, then there were people. One autistic youngster who declared himself a big-bang theorist objected to the 'Creation story'. This gave us the chance to slip in a mini-enactment of humankind re-inventing its own myths. Broaden our thinking and it's the same story. First, there was the big bang, then things evolved, then people. The classes are always conducted as a river of activity in which preconceived plans give way to the 'moment'.

The shop carpets were laid, the shelves stacked, and group members became farmers looking for working boots, housewives wanting sensible shoes and their daughters wanting anything but. Each role-player was encouraged to develop his or her own feeling for the part.

Daryl was different. He played Marcia's father, Jack, just as she had shown him—tall, upright, posing with his cigar. Jack didn't smoke the cigar. He posed with it, a symbol of the American businessman and also a reminder of exciting places that a small-town store owner would never visit—Bolivia, Havana and Brazil, birthplaces of cigars. We were all enjoying ourselves, none more so than Daryl.

I had taken Tess aside, my arm about her shoulders to stop her flailing arms from causing damage and hurt. After a while, her attention went to the stage area for the first time. She snuggled into me, enjoying the warmth of being held by teacher and returning it with her own affection. The tension left her body, a kind of 'oozing out' which told me that something was about to happen. The message was clearly communicated through body contact.

Suddenly, to everyone's amazement, Tess said in a loud voice, 'Light the cigar'.

Together we ran to the stage. Tess's hands, covered with sticking plasters from self-hurt, reached into her dress, produced an imaginary lighter, flicked it into flame and psychodramatically lit Jack's cigar.

It was a triumph. We cried and cheered.

That awakening could not have happened by sitting and talking. Tess didn't talk and couldn't sit for more than a few minutes. Her isolation kept her from contact, other than violent and largely accidental hitting.

TIME TRAVELLING

It could not have taken place without time, talked of not in the 1960s of Jack's actual shop but remade as a here-and-now 1960s. This concept of time allowed the past to be brought into the present and gave us all a glimpse of the future—a pointer of hope and change for Tess.

Looking at time in this way has important implications for personal, social and cultural behaviour. We can rehearse the future, try it on for size and not be punished for making mistakes.

CREATIVE SPACE

Space was the second essential, the filling of space with the shoe-shop details and character quirks of Jack's customers. Most therapy takes place in a space, a consulting room or hospital room which, apart from a chair or couch, is unrelated to the therapeutic process. The reforming of our space into a shop was imperative to what happened.

MANY-SIDED REALITY

Reality was more complex, a variety of perceptions that it was my job to bring together in a dramatic wholeness. Each role-player developed his or her own view of small-town America. They produced an aspect of American life they had never before considered; something demanding of their creativity. Marcia relived the reality of her youth again. I lived the reality of contacting the hidden Tess for the first time.

And Tess? Tess left the reality of her isolation, felt the reality of teacher's love and returned it. She entered the new reality of classroom activity and saw something that did not fit the reality of things she had seen. It raised the question within her, 'What's the point of having a cigar if you don't light it?' That led to her speaking and to her beautiful and hope-affirming action.

Let's look further at the question of creative space. Our local school of art is a large space, a concrete factory built at the top of a windswept hill. It is a mile and a half from the town centre and was purpose-built by economists with little knowledge of art or of artists. Architecturally they have turned a filing cabinet on its side and stuffed students into it. The classrooms are small and square with low ceilings. Windows face in any direction according to the room's position in a pile of rooms. It was not always so.

The old art school had studios with high ceilings and large north-facing windows. Rooms necessarily built on the south side were for storage, staff or offices. Most important of all, the school was set right on the quayside among the traffic, boats, ships, cranes, people and sea birds. The gulls could be fed from the windows. It was a place of creative learning, standing at the very heart of the town's daily creativity. The position that a learning space occupies within a community is of great importance.

At the back of the new art school and the technical college to which it is attached are two prefabricated huts for classes of young people with severe learning difficulties. The rooms are small and crowded with steel furniture, filing cabinets and sharp-cornered tables. The young people using these huts have many disabilities both mental and physical. It has taken some time for the huts to be fitted with ramps and only recently has some wheelchair access been arranged for the main college buildings.

The shed-like prefabrications were built to house a system designed to keep young disabled students apart from the college proper and out of the hair of the fast-moving society which the rest of the college serves. It does seem that society's understanding of human space and human scale is woefully inadequate. The rooms are suitable for teaching those able to absorb facts and may even be suitable for teaching people what to think. They most certainly are not suitable for teaching young people how to think, how to move or how spontaneously and creatively to express themselves. In working with young disabled people, stimulating environmental space is of prime importance. The rooms need to be less crowded and much more open; a changeable space in which mind, movement and emotions can be freed for action. Whatever the conditions, the psychodramatist has first to clear an area big enough for warm-up, enactment and sharing. The session can take place anywhere depending on the skill of the director and the willingness of his group,

and I do mean anywhere—from the street or the football stadium to the clinic or classroom. Ideally, of course, the space will be specially constructed for action methods; it will have a stage area, a balcony, maybe theatre lights to help build up atmosphere and an audience area for those not involved in the action or waiting to be called upon to help. The reason for making this enactment area whether improvised or ideal is to give space for the group or individual member to work out a problem. The groundwork for my future understanding of the breadth of Moreno's space concept was laid in 1960. Although I did not appreciate it at the time, it brought together the four universals—time, space, reality and cosmos.

Thirteenth story

Radio and television networks told us that the world's first spaceman was orbiting Earth. Some people actually saw the ship just as satellites can nowadays be regularly seen passing across the heavens. As I looked for a sight of that first spacecraft, it occurred to me that it carried the Columbus of the twentieth century. A new era had been born and I felt that the young Russian cosmonaut on board, Major Uri Gagarin, was a man to meet and learn from. Fortunately, I had two partners who agreed—Ray Bernard and John Gorman. Humankind was at the point of important change. Our idea of space was being reassessed before our eyes.

Together with our friends, Dave Lambert (General Secretary), and Fred Hollingsworth (President of the Foundry Workers Union), we helped to bring Gagarin to England. At the union headquarters in Manchester he was given a gold medal which I had designed, and he was invested as an honorary member of the union. Major Uri, himself an ex-foundry worker, became the first, and, so far, only, space explorer member of a British trades union. It was the height of the Cold War, the visit took place against massive opposition from the giant of the British Establishment. A group of working-class Davids cut that Goliath down to size. They added a tiny victory to the struggle for peace on Earth.

Driving from Manchester airport to the headquarters of the Union, Gagarin was drenched by a torrential downpour. We had hired a Rolls Royce; it had been used by the Duke of Edinburgh in the previous month, was a brand new model and the only open-topped Rolls in Britain. A barbershop owner lent me a heap of hot towels and I went into the men's toilet with our interpreter and Uri to towel him dry. This was my one moment of intimate contact. I liked the man, and asked, somewhat naively, 'What did you feel up there?' Gagarin paused and said, 'A terrible beauty'. The first awe-inspiring sight of our blue planet was understandably beautiful. But terrible? I wondered. Gagarin caught my confusion and added, 'Who can I tell?' As he said so, a tear ran down the side of his nose. The first Columbus, the discoverer of America, had a crew with him on his journey into the unknown, albeit a mutinous one. But this second Columbus went alone, unknowing if he would ever return to Earth. Here was the bravest man I have ever met, yet his tear was as wet as mine.

Because of the euphoria of the moment and the success in actually getting this remarkable man to Manchester against all the odds, the full impact of his aloneness didn't hit me for years. His tender tear now brings home to me that human beings the world over are more alike than different.

My friend John Gorman recently (1993) wrote to me with a reminder that, when Gagarin arrived at London Airport, the government sent some underling with the rank of major to meet him, saying that protocol did not allow them to send anyone of greater importance as Gagarin was only a major. By the end of his visit, such was the volume of public acclaim that he was invited to tea with the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

CHANGING AND UNCHANGING

A fuller understanding of the changing concept of space and the unchanging need of humans for support and loving contact came fourteen years later when I read Dr Moreno's speech delivered to the Second International Psychodrama Congress:

Yet, despite the fact that all therapies have noticeably neglected the element of space, the physicists, the astronomers and the astronauts have not. In the cosmic affluence of our time, space and physical communication through it have become enormously important categories in the mind of man, in his vision of life and of the universe as he plans to travel to the moon, the planets, and eventually the stars.

(Moreno 1987:5)

This wise overview is the reason a director has a group or a protagonist describe and concretise the space in which they make their investigation and their intervention. It is also the space where insight and catharsis are given life.

I have written of time, space and reality in terms of their formation within a psychodrama session but, as I have shown, Moreno asks us to work beyond the walls of the theatre. It's why I included the story of Gagarin.

We live in the time of incredible change—maybe of make or break for humankind. Everything is up for change, even to the extent of choosing what sex we will be. My stories, the Holwell Box, are simply small tools to help us think beyond the walls of our own heads and hearts as well as the therapy room.

COSMOS—THE FOURTH UNIVERSAL

The fourth universal is the cosmos, another side of the Holwell Box. Let us look more closely at how the philosophical idea works in practice. To quote A.S.Neill, writing in *A Dominie's Log*, first published in 1915: 'When our scholars discover that we are only human, then they like us, and they listen to us' (Neill 1986:20).

Similarly, in a psychodrama session when we see the human reasons behind a person's feelings, thoughts and actions, we listen more carefully. We understand more clearly that people are the product of their experiences and, more particularly, of their relationships. Our lives make us what and how we are. Careful listening is one of the first tasks of a session. Psychodrama is an education and a therapy in and of, relationships.

The philosophy creatively applied through the techniques unites art and science. If we accept the concept of a continuous cosmic drama, we can also see that humankind is part of that drama. If, as Blake said, we see a world in a grain of sand, then it is also in a human cell. Wherever we are, the cosmic drama is all around us and we are part of it. When we enter a room or a space in which a psychodrama session is to be held, the drama is already there. It is hot or cold, light or dark, the rain drums at the window or the sun radiates from the skylight.

Fourteenth story

In Finland, a protagonist from the far north, estranged from his wife, felt loss and sadness for his brain-damaged son. As director I asked, 'What do you really want for your boy?' The man answered, 'Sunshine'. It was high summer and the sun beamed in through windows in an

unused corner of the room. I had everyone quickly rearrange the whole place. The audience area was changed and the stage, or enactment area, put into full sunshine. Immediately the energy within the group lifted as people moved chairs and tables, jostling and interacting in their desire to give the protagonist his wish—sunshine for his son. The group feeling was good; the protagonist felt honoured. We had created a rich starting point simply by plugging ourselves into the ongoing cosmic performance, sunlight beaming into the room. Inside the room the man's moods and the mood of the group were accompanied by the changing mood of the weather outside. The sun came and went and at one point it began to rain just as the protagonist became tearful. There was darkness and light, coolness and warmth. We felt we were part of something bigger.

The high point came during the sharing. We sat in a circle as the daylight faded. Suddenly, the sun threw out its last light of the day. Magically, it fell upon the tired protagonist and the auxiliary who had played his cerebrally damaged son. It was a breathtakingly beautiful experience.

I'm not saying that psychodrama is magic. I am saying that magical things can happen when you connect into the cosmic drama. The director has to draw on cosmic phenomena for inspiration. If they are able to connect the session's personal drama with the universal drama, then sometimes the universal will get plugged into the personal.

When Dr Moreno asked us to see ourselves not just as individual or social beings but also as cosmic beings, he was looking far beyond the therapy-room walls. He was aiming beyond the streets, the fields and the mountains into the great cosmos itself. He was suggesting that we are part of the whole, an essential, though admittedly small, part of a great evolving system. What makes our smallness a little more significant is that we are creators. We have the ability to act and to think. With that ability goes responsibility, to ourselves, the world around us and to the heavens around our planet. That, it seems to me, is Moreno's holistic view—a view that is all the more urgent as we step into the cosmos with our probes and our spaceships. Moreno was somewhat ahead of the Green Movement.

My own view is that he was very much in contact with the ongoing evolution of cosmic thinking—Petra Kelly came after but St Francis came before. Moreno has an important place in that ongoing process.

THE GODHEAD

The greatest model of 'objectivity' man has ever conceived was the idea of the Godhead, a being who knows and feels with the universe because he created it, a being unlimited in his ability to penetrate all facets of the universe and still be entirely free of 'bias'.

(Moreno 1953: xli)

The Godhead is Dr Moreno's way of symbolically representing the source of creativity within the cosmos. In working with groups exploring Moreno's concepts by using the Holwell Box, the most contentious of the six sides is the Godhead. The 'Godhead' is the label for the sixth side or lid.

This contentiousness is precisely why it is important to my own teaching concept. The idea of difference, of discussion, agreement or agreed disagreement is essential for psychodrama's development and to the creation of practitioners who are non-judgemental beings. By this I mean people who see human variance and difficulty and accept, even as they help to change, such reality.

Moreno died in 1974. Life moves on and we must continually re-express his ideas in ways that are valid to the ever-increasing speed of change with which we live. That means constant testing of ideas and methods, our own above all. It also ultimately means learning to live together even without understanding one another!

I appreciate Moreno's view of Judaism and Marxism as great motivating forces of his younger days. I also agree with him that the former was religion without science and the latter science without religion. I would use the word 'spirit'. I believe that life has proven Moreno correct on both counts. I further endorse the creative way Moreno took the positive aspects of his youth and attempted to create a 'third way' forward.

HERE AND NOW

In an age and a culture so dedicated to materialism many find difficulty with a God concept and spend a great deal of time blaming religion and its running mate, politics, for 'failing'. My own observation is that the failure usually lies in the human use of ideas rather than in the ideas themselves. It's like blaming aeroplanes for dropping bombs or listening devices for destroying people's privacy. Men and women do those things, not ideas or the technology resulting from ideas.

Humans have looked for some guiding star or some model of an ideal or scientifically sound social system since the beginning of time. That long struggle has been full of contradictions. After the October Revolution in 1917 and the attempt to build a system which rejected religion and the idea of a Godhead, both were in fact re-created. A religious fervour inspired millions leading up to 1917 and continued long after the experiment had become thoroughly corrupt. The belief system of those struggling to create the 'New Man and Woman' blinded people to the corruption of their belief. It also made them blind to the behaviour of the new gods they had created. People constantly drew strength from their gods, not least from the god within themselves. These are important sources of energy that must constantly be checked to see that they haven't become false gods. In his early writings, *Dialogues of the Here and Now* and later in *The Words of the Father*, Moreno developed a new dimension, repeating it in the 'Preludes' to *Who Shall Survive?*

A dimension which unconsciously was always there but which has never been properly spelled out, theoretically the dimension of the 'I' or God in the 'first' person (in contrast to the 'thou' God of the Christian, and to the 'he' God of the Mosaic tradition), the dimension of subjectivity, the dimension of the actor and creator, of spontaneity and creativity. The dimension of subjectivity does not deprive the Godhead of the objectivity, neutrality and impartiality of the old model but makes the path free for the exercise of cosmic empathy, love and intimate participation, in other words, for the psychodrama of God.

(Moreno 1953: xl)

Personally I find no problem in accepting Moreno's subjectivity, neutrality and impartiality demand for psychodramatists even though I'm a lifelong partisan. His aim of empathy, love and participation is what, for me, partisanship is about.

Fifteenth story

Using the Holwell Box with a group in Sheffield, an older woman disagreed with my attempt to explain the Godhead. 'A long time ago, when my first child was born', she said, 'I reached down, felt her head breeching and knew it was the Godhead'. I remarked softly on being pleased that a girl could also be the Godhead, a position reserved in the period of which she spoke for the man child. The woman replied, 'Oh, her head wasn't about gender, it **was** the future, the child **is** the future.'

For me there is plenty of room in my concept for this older woman's poetic wisdom.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

An aspect of Moreno's philosophy of the encounter that I have not seen written about or heard much discussed is the ongoing process of self-encounter through psychodrama. Over and over again people taking part in psychodrama sessions encounter parts of themselves or 'other selves' of which they have previously been only partially aware and even wholly unaware. This happens not just to protagonists but to directors building relationships with protagonists. It can also happen to an auxiliary taking a seemingly unfamiliar role and finding a familiarity with some hidden aspect of the self.

Sixteenth story

My first child was born in 1952; we called her Janey. She was very beautiful and died two and a half years later. Janey was buried on a bright summer's day on a hillside near Carlisle.

Her mother and I entered a period of numbness asking ourselves over and over again the eternal question of bereaved parents, 'Why us?' As the pathetic little box was lowered into the ground it all seemed unreal. It could not really be happening. The scene was a cardboard cut-out and the people actors in some kind of bizarre play. I felt the curtain would come down. We would applaud and all go home discussing the performance.

Then suddenly I was brought back to the reality of the little graveside by the words of my friend Walter Wallace. He spoke the cosmic truth of ongoing creation that, as our child was laid to rest another was already growing within my wife. His words brought awareness of my feet holding on to the earth and everything came into sharp focus. The trees at the cemetery's edge were framed by the colour of ripe corn moving in waves before the wind. Among the trees my neighbours stood dark, in suits and overalls. Some had come straight from the coal mine and railway yard their bicycles black against the corn. None came close, fearful of intruding on private family pain. I cannot recall their faces but will never forget the supportive touch of their hands as we left the graveyard. To this day the brown and gold of ripe corn is my favourite colour.

My wife retreated into a silent sorrow to be fuelled by other life tragedies that perhaps led to her own death from cancer at the age of forty-four.

My own way of coping was to become tougher, more macho, as seemed appropriate to a man working in the coal-mining industry. I never cried or spoke of our tragedy, threw myself into working-class politics and spent my spare time helping others found the Spastics Society.

Twenty years later I was a protagonist in a psychodrama session, my first. I felt doubtful about it, feeling that what went on inside me was my business!

My director was Doug Warner from Maryland. I was not particularly drawn to this pipe-smoking, rather aloof, man and yet, twenty-five years later, I feel as a brother to him. It's a brotherhood born out of his creative relationship to me in that one psychodrama session.

As the enactment reached its peak, Doug had the group come on to the stage and become the field of golden corn. It was corn become people and people become corn—total surplus reality. I had not gone back in time, time had come forward to us in that shining golden space.

My little girl, an Indian doctor in a beautiful flowing sari, touched my hand and walked away into the corn that closed around her. It was a wondrous second parting.

I was in a state of psychodramatic shock, heard little of the sharing but in the weeks that followed that encounter with my old self, important changes took place. My tough coping mechanism seemed inappropriate. I became softer, no longer afraid of my vulnerability.

My grief remained but its sad strikes became less frequent and even those I felt were shared with grieving parents throughout history and across the world. What had been a way of coping became a conscious, more tender way of seeing and a more creative way of getting on with my life.

The third self-encounter took place another twenty years on and is directly related to that psychodrama session directed by Doug Warner.

I had a massive haemorrhage and was found to have gut cancer. The operation was long, followed by nine days in an intensive care unit. It's a period lost to my conscious self except for one thing which I believe took place during the operation.

Seventeenth story

I was walking into a field of ripe corn. The colour of the swaying field was Arab Gold; I knew this from seeing the sun on the yellow-brown flank of a stallion in Baghdad. It was the days when Saddam was a darling of the English Establishment who were selling him weapons as hard as they could go. My mind saw everything clearly and also the meaning behind everything.

All was shining and crystal clear.

My little girl came towards me through the corn which moved in rhythm with her walking. She was exactly that little 2-year-old again and reached her arms towards me. Our fingers almost touched when a voice said in my right ear, 'Hang about, Ken, it's not time yet.' The words are mine but the voice was not. It was a voice from beyond me, perhaps the voice of collective wisdom of parents and lost children. My little girl stopped, a smile crossed her face and without sadness she turned and walked back to be lost again among the brilliance.

It was my third self-encounter and third parting from my daughter. It was a simple, almost matter-of-fact meeting and separation, utterly beautiful and totally without sorrow.

My mind tells me it was a dream or vision released by the anaesthetic; my feelings tell me it was a message that helped me leave the hospital and move towards recovery. In doing so I have changed again. I value every moment yet feel prepared to let go when the time comes. That last statement, 'when the time comes' seems inadequate. I want to decide the time and place; I want to be my own God. Dying, it seems to me, is a case of the right combination of reasons for death. Simply an ongoing life process.

Doug Warner introduced me to the old self that didn't know how to grieve, which, in turn, led to the birth of the vulnerable man—proud of vulnerability. The cancer fighter called on Doug Warner's psychodrama scene to avoid death, to turn it all into life-giving blood within and to get on with life. Each encounter with an old but still living self seemed to give birth to a new more adequate self. Adequate to the changed circumstances and hopefully to future demands. It's what I call ongoing psychodramatic process.

CONCLUSION

As I write this chapter our media technology is being used to broadcast two main items.

The first is the cuckolding antics of Britain's future king and company. It's a sign of the times which leaves much to be desired, not least of the media makers. Psychodrama could help them all, commoners and kings!

The second item concerns the demise of the Soviet Union and is today headlined in my 'quality' newspaper, 'Marx's Ideas have Failed its People'. All my life I've heard one lot say that and the other lot say the same about Christian ideas. The truth is that great humanist ideas do not fail people: people fail great humanist ideas. Their greed, their frailty, their power seeking and stupidity get in the way. In fairness, even the best get tired and their dreams die. But the wonderful thing about people is that somewhere, someone always starts once more. They work for something better and begin to dream again.

Even now, in this dismal and vision-empty period, some have the courage to dream again. They include psychodramatists! It's an ongoing revolutionary process, an eternal continuum of creation.

Which brings me back to Dr Jacob Levy Moreno's philosophy. Isn't it a worthy guide to help us face current problems? Aren't they relevant ideas to carry with us into the new century, honing, broadening, changing and perfecting them as we go?

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